

# HUMANISTIC AND HOLISTIC LEARNING THEORY

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## 6.13.12

I've used *Humanistic Learning Theory* as the chapter title here to provide a general sense of what it might contain; however, labels and categories often get in the way of true understanding. They describe where a thing may exist but they don't describe the thing. The views described in this chapter don't fit easily into categories; however, they share two overriding tenets: First, the goal of education should be human development and personal growth (as opposed to higher test scores). Focus on these will naturally increase intellectual achievement and prepare students to contribute to global as well as local societies. Second human nature is basically good. That is, humans have a natural inclination to learn, to grow, and develop fully. As such, education is most effective when it aligns with this natural inclination.



## HUMAN EDUCATION

Psychologist Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow are generally thought to be the founders of modern humanistic learning theory (DeCarvalho, 1991). For an excellent historical perspective of humanist education and its evolution into what is today known as holistic education I would recommend *What are Schools For?* by Ron Miller (1997).

### *Two Misconceptions about Humanistic (Human) Learning Theory*

I want to start by addressing two points that often get in the way of understanding exactly what humanistic learning theory is: **First, humanistic learning theory and humanistic education are different from secular humanism.** To help avoid confusion here I'll use the terms "**human learning theory**" and "**human education**". The secular humanist paradigm or world view makes a god out of human logic. That is, human logic, the traditional scientific paradigm, and the laws of cause and effect are the ultimate authority on everything for the secular humanist.

*"Secular Humanism is a way of thinking and living that aims to bring out the best in people so that all people can have the best in life. Secular humanists reject supernatural and authoritarian beliefs. They affirm that we must take responsibility for our own lives and the communities and world in which we live. Secular humanism emphasizes reason and scientific inquiry, individual freedom and responsibility, human values and compassion, and the need for tolerance and cooperation (Counsel for Secular Humanism, [www.secularhumanism.org](http://www.secularhumanism.org), retrieved June 12, 2006).*

**Human learning theory does not concur with this view.** While human learning theory acknowledges the importance of the traditional scientific paradigm which seeks to know reality through the use of controlled variables, it recognizes that using this as the only way to look at reality is limiting. Trying to understand human beings or physical reality using *only* experimental research is like trying to make sense of the world by looking

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at it through a cardboard tube with one eye closed. While reason and scientific inquiry are important ways to discover new information; this information is never complete and should always be understood in the greater context.

Also, human learning theory and human education have nothing to say about with religion or “supernatural” beliefs, either for or against as conservative religious groups often contend. While there may be ideas found within human learning theory that reflect or resonate with one’s personal religious, spiritual, or metaphysical beliefs; as a theory it neither dismisses nor embraces traditional religion (or nontraditional religion for that matter). I’ll say it one more time to make sure this point is absolutely clear: **Even though they share five common letters in their title, human learning theory is *NOT* secular humanism.** Human learning theory and human education have nothing to do with putting God in or taking God out of schools as some contend.

*"We need to get back to the basics!"*

*"We've got too much this of fluffy, self-concept stuff!"*

**Okay, my second point: Human learning theory and human education, when correctly applied, compliment and enhance academic learning, intellectual growth, and the development of basic skills; they don’t take away from these.** Human learning theory is concerned with personal growth and includes attention to students’ affective dimensions such self-concept, values, and emotions. However, human education isn’t an either/or situation in regards to academic learning and personal growth. One doesn’t take away from the other; rather, they both serve to enhance the other. Human education enhances learning by making personal connections to students’ lives, emotions, and experiences. Thus, students learn more and learn more deeply. For human educators, academic learning provides a context for personal growth and the development of knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in the world.

What do I mean by this? An example: Let's imagine you're a teacher. (It's a stretch, I know.) You want your students to improve their writing skills. Simple enough? Now you could have them write a report about Bolivian export products, or describe their summer vacation, or analyze and explain their true feelings about the Laffer curve and tax revenues. These are all fine writing projects that I'm sure would result in some fascinating reading (not). However you might instead have students describe an accomplishment or a dream, or they could write about somebody they look up to and identify two traits they share with that person, or they could make a case for what they believe extra tax revenues should be used to support.

Over the course of a week students would write their draft versions and share them with other students in small groups; get feedback and suggestions; and then edit, revise, and turn in their final drafts. In this way students would be using writing to organize and communicate their ideas. They'd also be involved in a bit of intrapersonal exploration and they'd be communicating, relating, and getting feedback from other human beings. This type of activity would be a bit more interesting and internally motivating than writing about Bolivian export products and it would also serve to enhance writing instruction. This is one simple example of how academic instruction and personal growth can each serve to enhance the other.

Students can learn in the traditional sense of acquiring a designated body of knowledge and a set of skills, and at the same time, they can begin to understand themselves and others and learn what it means to be a human being living on the good planet earth as they engage in the process of making personal connections to subject matter and other human beings. Indeed, the latter enhances the former to a great degree. That is, students learn more and learn more deeply when there is a meaningful connection to what is to be learned. Good education is good human education.



### ***An Educational Alternative***

Admittedly, human learning theory is not easy to grasp. That's perhaps why many have presented cartoon versions of it in their negative critique. Human learning theory is a reaction to a system of education that is seen as de-humanizing and a set of conditions for learning that some consider inhumane. In many schools students are often (a) asked to be passive learners; (b) manipulated by external rewards, competition, and the fear of failure; (c) required to learn in ways that aren't natural for them; (d) expected to learn things that have no relevance or connection to their lives; (e) treated as simply a brain and spinal cord without emotions, intuition, creativity, or spiritual dimensions; and (f) pressured to subscribe to traditional views and values of society, ways of knowing, and physical reality.

Human learning theory provides an alternative to the traditional factory model of education that sends students are treated as products and sent down a 13-year conveyer belt. In these educational factories standards become synonymous with standardization as all students are force fed the same curriculum. The same facts and skills are attached to all students at pre-determined times as they march silently along in lock step likes cars moving down an assembly line. Efficiency, uniformity, and control of students and teachers are valued over creativity, innovation, individuality, and freedom. Teaching the curriculum becomes more important than teaching the child. Traits that can be measured and quantified are valued over creativity, inspiration, and intuition even though these last three have been essential in humankind's greatest advancement. Sadly, because they are hard to measure and quantify, these last three traits get little attention in education curriculum

On the traditional educational conveyer belt teachers are thought of as mere factory workers. They're told what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach it. Standardized tests are used as a system of quality control to determine the effectiveness of their teaching and to insure the quality of the educational product (students). Our human children are described in terms of numbers and percentile rankings. They're sorted, categorized, and defined by how far they are away from some mythical norm. And they're prodded and manipulated in order to get them to ingest information that others (who do not know them) have determined to be important to them (even though it may not be).



### ***A Quick Quiz***

Here's a question for you: What happens to students' natural inclination to learn? They enter

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kindergarten ready to learn, joyfully looking forward to finding out about the world in which they exist, seeing themselves as whole and complete human beings; only to have the joy of learning stomped out of them by 4th grade (Patterson, 1973). Why is this? Anyone? ... Anyone? ... Class? ... Class?

That's right, it's because we ask students to learn in ways that aren't natural for them and we insist they learn things that are abstract or have no connection to their real world experiences.



### ***The Basics of Human Learning Theory***

As stated in the opening paragraph, human learning theory is concerned with personal growth and the full development of each human's potential not on just an intellectual level, but also on an emotional, psychological, creative, social, physical, and even spiritual level (DeCarvalho, 1991; Maslow, 1971; Morris, 1978; Rogers, 1969; Patterson, 1973). The goal of education, from this point of view, is not to simply put a uniform body of knowledge in students' heads; or to transmit "traditional", nationalist, or religious values; or to train students to keep the economy running strongly; or to create another generation of termite-like consumers of material goods. Instead, the goal is to facilitate the development of knowledgeable human beings who know and are able to nurture themselves, other humans, and their environments; to instill a joy of learning; to promote the discovery of each student's passions and special talents; and to teach the knowledge and skills necessary for students to be good decision makers.

Human learning theory is also based on the premise that all humans have a natural tendency to grow, to learn, and to develop fully. Carl Rogers described this as an instinctive inner core that moves people toward reaching their full potential (Rogers, 1969). Abraham Maslow (1968) used the term "self-actualization" to describe humans' innate, natural progression to their highest state. The goal of human education then is to create educational experiences that align with these natural desires. When students learn naturally, they learn more, they learn joyously, and they learn more deeply. However, when students are coerced into learning through external motivation they learn less and they learn to not like learning.

Human educators strive to facilitate learning by creating a structured environment with differentiated instruction where students have the chance to explore topics of interest to them, learn in ways that are more natural (active learning, social interaction, real life problem solving and activities), and learn at their own pace. Not always an easy task, I know. That's why creative, intelligent, caring teachers are so important. Anybody off the street can open a teachers manual, assign activities, and grade students.

As an illustrative example, let me ask you this: How do young children learn to talk? Well for starters, they aren't asked to work in ability groups. They don't have to do hours of drill and practice or practice meaningless sounds before they're allowed to talk. They're not asked to talk about things that aren't important to them or a part of their lives or experiences. They're not asked to experience failure. Instead, children learn to speak because, as Norm Chomsky says, they're naturally hard wired to learn the language (Chomsky, 1965). They also learn to speak because:

- they're immersed in actual, real-life speaking experiences.
- they're encouraged to talk about things that make sense and are of interest to them.

- they use language for real life purposes. (“Cookie!”)
- we encourage and expect them to learn differently and at different rates.
- we respond to them instead of correct them.
- we encourage their attempts and successful approximations.
- we encourage their creativity and humor.
- language is involved in social interactions.

Quite simply put then, human learning theory would apply these same characteristics to classroom learning in K-12 learning situations (and perhaps higher education as well), *to the greatest extent possible*. (Remember, children and teachers are not standardized products. Every situation needs a little more of some things and a little less of other things.) And yes, a creative, intelligent teacher can do this if given the conditions and opportunity to do so. I’ve seen it. And here’s the thing: When you tap into students’ natural interests teaching becomes MUCH easier and MUCH MORE enjoyable.



### *The Goal and Supporting Principles of Human Education*

The goal of human education is to develop fully functioning, self-actualized human beings who have the capacity to nurture themselves, others, and their environment; who are responsible world citizens able to contribute to democratic societies, and who are life-long learners. The following supporting principles of human education can help in achieving this goal:

**1. Students’ learning should be as self-directed as possible.** In other words, students should be given choices about what they learn, how they learn, and how they demonstrate their learning, **to the greatest degree possible**. Now, before you go running off like a headless chicken, let me clarify: Choice does not mean total choice all the time. Choice means as much as meets the situation. Choice exists on a continuum from no choices every on the far end to total choice all the time on the other end. It’s not an either/or situation; within these two extremist positions there exists a variety of ways students can make choices about their learning. For example, you can offer:

- *no choice*. “Boys and girls, we’re studying the Civil War this month. This is the book we’re going to read. This is the topic you’ll be doing reports on.”

- *a choice within a set*. “Boys and girls, I’ve put out five books for you, you can choose the one you wish to read.”

- *a choice within a category*. “Boys and girls, we’re studying the Civil War this month, you can read any book or investigate any topic related to the Civil War.”

- *total choice*. “Boys and girls, find a topic that interests and inspires you for your research project. These are the criteria. This is the due date. Find a book that you love for our reading class.”

Some students or situations require more choice, some less choice. The goal would be to provide the least restrictive environment. This would mean, the minimum amount of control necessary to create a positive learning experience.

**2. The subject matter to be learned should be relevant to the personal interests of the students.** It should be connected to the students’ lives or interests whenever possible and to the greatest extent possible. Again, this is where your teaching intelligence kicks in. When learning number facts in the primary grades,

have students use them to figure out problems in real life situations. Teachers need to be creative to find ways in which mandated subject matter reflect students' lives. However, there needs to be space within a curriculum for students to explore topics of interest to them. For example, adolescents are extremely interested in topics related to social experiences, relationships, and defining ones self in terms of values and future roles or occupations. Related themes can be incorporated within a variety of subject areas with a little creativity and imagination. Remember, we teach human beings, not curriculum.

**3. The full spectrum of the human experience should be included in the educational experience.**

Emotions, relationships, creativity, imagination, intuition, and real life problems are all part of the human experience. Including them in the educational experience does not take away from learning; rather enhances it. Human educators want to create the conditions where human beings can learn to use their knowledge as well as intellect, emotions, and intuition to solve problem, make decisions, or come to know the world. They're not trying to produce intellectual automatons.

Human education attends to student's emotional side. Bloom does this in a very sterile and controlled manner. The goal of human education is to involve the whole human in the learning experience. Affective education in human learning theory not only includes emotions, but teaching about them. Teaching the whole student might include asking for students' personal response to issues and ideas. For example in a science or social studies class you would still study important knowledge, however you'd seek to provide a greater context for this knowledge. You'd look to see how it impact students' personal lives, how it impacted other human beings. You would include art, drama, music in exploring or responding to information. Art, drama, music, personal response to ideas, inquiry, students' person connections, how it impacts their lives, their experiences, social learning in the form of cooperative learning activities. Explore all parts, learn more, and learn more deeply.

**4. Schools should produce students who want to learn and know how to learn.** As I've stated before, humans are programmed to want to find out about their world. Learning is a natural thing. We kill off this natural instinct when we always ask students to learn about things that have no relevance to their lives (or we don't help them make the connections), or when we ask them to learn in ways that aren't natural for them. For example, few real humans could accomplish anything in the 50 minute time slots we provide students in most classrooms. I can't imagine sitting down to write or to do the research necessary for this book knowing that I would be stopped at 50 minutes. It often takes me this long just to get warmed up.

Part of our jobs is to teach students how to learn. That is, how to get the necessary information they need, how to critically analyze and evaluate that information, and how to use and apply it. In education we also need

**5. Students learn best in a non-threatening environment.** What is meant by non-threatening environment? Threats come in the form of physical threats, but also social threats, emotional threats, things that endanger one's self esteem. When school becomes too much about competition and measuring up, you invariably have a population who experiences failure. Think about the student with learning disabilities, who comes to first or second grade and fails for six hours straight (except at recess). This student often looks for some area to succeed, which is often screwing around, becoming the class clown, or some other less-than scholarly activity. Students will find something they can be successful at sooner or later. We'd much rather have it be a school thing than a smoking thing, or a drinking thing, or some other criminal activity thing.

This is why, the arts and athletics are so important in education. I would, as has Eliot Eisner (cite) go on for pages describing the arts as the only real human thing left in the curriculum. Music, literature, drama, dance, visual art all help us understand what it means to be a human being. They give voice to that intrapersonal part of our selves that is common among all humans.

What should it profit a person if s/he should gain the whole world but lose his or her soul? What should

it profit our students if they produce test scores in the top percentiles but don't understand who they are? It's an emptiness that often leads to the destructive behaviors of drinking, teen sex, drugs, and other criminal activity.



### ***The Human Teacher***

Teaching for the human teacher, starts with a relationship with students. Until then, you are nothing more than circus performer. Carl Rogers (1969) describes three conditions for learning based on his work in creating therapeutic relationships with his clients. They are:

**1. Respect.** You respect each student, what Rogers (1961) calls unconditional positive regard (UPR). You accept your students for who they are, unconditionally. Note that this is much different from accepting unacceptable behavior. This respect for students helps to promote their own self-respect and sense of self-efficacy, which in turn enhance learning.

**2. Empathetic understanding.** You are able to see things from the child's point of view. You know what it feels like to be excited, lost, confused, frustrated, curious, anxious, confident, or bored. You know what it feels like to have a teacher who cares for you, who is rooting for you to succeed, we believe that you are of worth and can accomplish things.

**3. Genuineness or congruence.** You are your real, authentic self. You aren't play a role or projecting what you believe a teacher should be. Rather, you are in touch with your own feelings and reacting authentically. Genuine teachers don't have to rely on methods or techniques; rather, they can trust their own emotions and experiences to guide them. (This is not to say that research-based strategies aren't important; instead, genuine teachers teach children not programs, methods, or strategies.

Once these conditions are met, then learning can begin. These conditions serve to enhance, not diminish, academic learning and intellectual development.



### ***Authentic Human Learning Experiences***

The human teacher recognizes that learning is most powerful when it employs **authentic human learning experiences (AHLE)**; those that addresses all dimensions of oneself. AHLE have some or all of the following eight characteristics:

**1. They are open ended.** If the activity is truly an AHLE, students are not expected to come to a predetermined conclusion or create a standardized product. Like life, there is no set answer. Students are allowed and even encouraged to come to their own conclusions. In creating or respond, they can take the idea as far as they want or, in turn, respond as minimally as they feel necessary. For example, an AHLE teacher would not say to a student, "This essay is too short. Why don't you go back and add some more description?"

**2. They are meaningful.** Assignments and activities are not created to keep students busy, to have them

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demonstrate their knowing, or to get a nice, dispersion of scores. Rather, activities are designed to increase understanding or to move students forward. Students are able to connect with the activity on a personal level. Homework is seen here, not as a measuring device, but as practice of things that have already been learned in class (Brophy, 1986). After reading a chapter in a social studies text, the regular curriculum might have students do some sort of worksheet to reinforce ideas or to gage their comprehension. An AHLE teacher would say, “Find an idea that you find interesting. Describe it using words, pictures, or some other form then tell us how it might touch your life.”

**3. They connect with students’ lives.** AHLE activities try to make connection with students’ inner or outer life. For example, after reading a story, students might be asked to describe similar feelings, events, characters, or situations from their own lives. In a science lesson students might be directed to see how a concept touches their lives or to take an imaginary trip somewhere and describe what they see, feel, and hear.

**4. They promote a greater understanding of self.** One of the goals of AHLE is to examine those parts of ourselves that have been ignored. This is done in order to begin to recognize why we think and feel as we do. In this way we can eventually free ourselves unconscious forces.

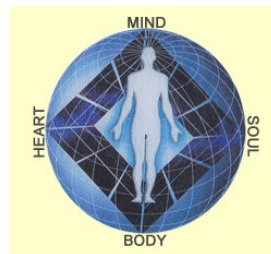
**5. They promote a greater understanding of others.** When students are able to look beyond surface differences they are able to see the great commonality in the human experience, one that transcends time, geography, race, ethnicity, society, status, and religions. This deeper look helps them to connect with others in a more meaningful way with others. They ask not why, but why.

**6. They allow students share their ideas with others.** Here students’ thinking, creating, and doing are not just for the teacher, but for a variety of audiences. Dramas are created and performed in other classrooms. Writing projects are shared and eventually turned into class books. Inquiry projects are written up in class journals and presented to others. Students are asked to respond to the ideas of others. Students work in cooperative learning groups where they are able to with other students. Students are also encouraged to turn to a neighbor to get help or to share an idea.

**7. They recognize multiple ways to demonstrate knowing.** In traditional educational experiences knowledge is demonstrated by taking a test or writing a report. AHLE teachers invite people to express their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways. For example, students may create dramas demonstrating important concepts, use art, photography, give a speech, use dance or creative movement, use music, dress up as a character and recreate important events, or create a video. Imagine in a social studies class, important concepts represented using sculpture or visual in art, set to music, and presented to other students in a video or slide presentation.

**8. They recognize and attend to the multiple dimensions of Self.** An AHLE invites participants to see the mind behind the brain and to realize experiences beyond the experience. Participants use knowledge and logic along with emotion and intuition to come to know and understand and to touch their highest ideals and pursue their greatest aspirations.

It is recognized, however, that it is not possible that every learning experience be an AHLE. However, taking small steps toward this will enhance your curriculum, student achievement, and the human condition.





## HOLISTIC EDUCATION

One's philosophy, whether stated or not, is the basis for all thought and action. This is true of one's life philosophy or one's educational philosophy; although at the deepest level these two are the same. Below, some of the ideas that comprise the philosophical orientation of this text are briefly described.

### Holistic Learning

How to Study Better, Understand More and  
Actually "Get" What You Want to Learn



#### *The Most Important Variable*

In the act of teaching and learning, it is not a particular methodology, technique, computer program, textbook, or standardized test that determines how much students learn. Rather; the teacher is the most significant variable in affecting the quality of education students receive. Thus, as teachers or future teachers, it is a good use of your personal resources to invest some time and energy in understanding this most significant variable: you. Who are you? What is your motivation? What brings you to this place? Why did you decide to become a teacher? These are not mundane questions to ask. Mari Montessori said that the best preparation for becoming a teacher is a study of oneself (Wolf, 1995). This means that if you want to help children find their strengths and accept who they are, you must first do so yourself.

Teaching and preparing to teaching then is as much an inward journey as an outward journey. The same could be said of learning in social studies and other classes. While we need to learn concepts and skills, it is also helpful to learn who we are, what we value, what philosophies seem to guide our life, and what strengths, limitations, and passions we have. These are the essence of authentic human learning experiences. They also describe the highest form of social studies education. So who are you? What do you think about first thing in the morning? What are you afraid of? What issues or events seem to always appear in your life? What gets in the way? What are your dreams? What things make you happy? What things move you? What life lessons do you need to learn?



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## ***A Holistic Approach to Education***

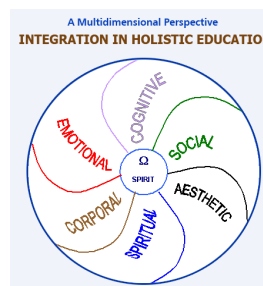
In this course, I am trying, as much as possible, to introduce you to aspects of holistic education. Holistic education is a philosophy or world view that seeks to address the problem of fragmentation and compartmentalization in education. The focus here is on helping students see things in terms of the whole instead of discrete parts. An equal emphasis is put on helping teachers see students in terms of the whole human being instead of just test scores and academic performance. Jack Miller offers an apt definition of holistic education:

*"Holistic education ... involves exploring and making connections. It attempts to move away from fragmentation to connectedness ... The focus of holistic education is on relationships: The relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationship among the various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and community, the relationship to the earth, and the relationship between self and Self" (Miller, 1996, p 8).*

The holistic education framework includes a wide range of ideas and approaches; however, all are based on the principle of interconnectedness.

*"As we have shown, the main principle of holistic education is the principle of wholeness, which holds that everything in the universe is interconnected to everything else. Everything that exists is related in a context of interconnectedness and meaning, and any change or event affects everything else. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. This means that the whole is comprised of relational patterns that are not contained in the parts. Therefore, a phenomenon can never be understood in isolation" (Navre, p. 29).*

One important holistic learning principle is the idea that you cannot separate the teaching and learning experience from the human experience. We are human beings first, who happen to be teaching and learning. We are not teachers and learners who happen to be human. This very aptly reinforces the definition of social studies used in this text as the study of humans. And what is it that makes us human? Among other things, it is our capacity to think reflectively, imagine, dream, create, intuit, emote, and create. It makes sense then that these dimensions be included in education in general, and in social studies education in particular.



## ***Three Holistic Learning Ideas***

Throughout this course you will see holistic learning ideas related to making three kinds of connections:

**1. Intrapersonal connections.** Social studies and other curriculum areas should be used to understand ones self.

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- nurture and give to Self.
- develop intrapersonal intelligence.
- self-actualize.
- align actions with values/philosophies.
- understand emotions, pursue interests, develop strengths.
- imagine and create.

**2. Interpersonal connections.** Social studies and other curriculum areas should be used to understand others.

- empathize and understand others.
- nurture and give to others.
- understand humans and humanity.
- develop interpersonal intelligence and social skills.
- perceive interpersonal connections.

**3. Interconnectedness.** Social studies and other curriculum areas should be used to understand the whole, to see the world in terms of inter-related and interconnected experiences.

- nurture and to give to all – (environment, humans, other).
- develop transpersonal intelligence: use logic, knowledge, intuition, emotion to solve problems.
- understand interconnectedness.
- perceive multidimensionality of all things.
- see systems not parts.
- embrace seemingly paradoxical ways of thinking (things are not either/or; rather they are.)



### THREE VIEWS OF TEACHING

As you know, teaching is not simply opening up the teacher's manual, doing the activities described there, and then assigning homework. Rather, teaching is a complex, multidimensional endeavor requiring you to break down complex concepts and present them in ways that students can comprehend. You then must design learning experiences to meet the needs of students of varying abilities and learning styles. And at the same time, effective teachers strive to help all students discover their special talents and learn the skills they need to reach their highest potential.

There are three common views of what constitutes teaching: teaching as transmission, teaching as transaction, and teaching as transformation (see Table 1.).

**1. Teaching as transmission.** This view perceives teaching to be the act of transmitting knowledge from Point A (teacher's head) to Point B (students' heads). This is a teacher-centered approach in which the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge, the arbitrator of truth, and the final evaluator of learning. A teacher's job from this perspective is to supply students with a designated body of knowledge in a pre-determined order. Academic achievement is seen as students' ability to demonstrate, replicate, or re-transmit this designated body of knowledge back to the teacher or to some other measuring agency or entity. From this perspective standardized tests are considered to be an apt measure of students' learning. While there are instances when this approach is useful, this text does not support it as a general teaching philosophy.

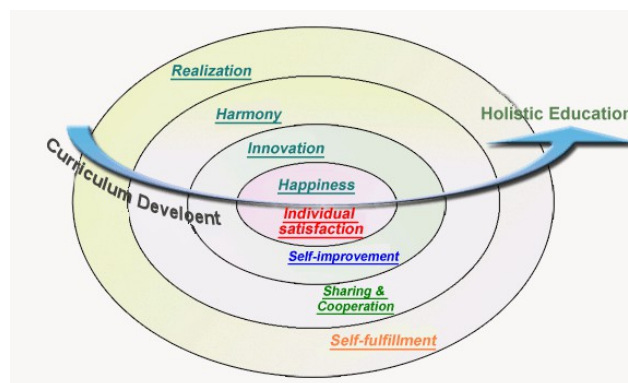


**2. Teaching as transaction.** This view perceives teaching as creating situations whereby students are able to transact with the material to be learned in order to construct knowledge. Constructivism is an educational philosophy consistent with this view. Here, knowledge is not passively received, rather, it is actively built up or constructed by students as they connect their past knowledge and experiences with new information (Santrock, 2004). And just as each student's past knowledge and experiences are different, so too is the interpretation, understanding, and meaning of the new information that each ultimately constructs.

As a teacher you are not expected to pour knowledge into the heads of learners; rather, you assist learners in their construction of knowledge by creating experiences where students' old information can transact with new information to create meaningful knowledge. Academic achievement from a constructivist perspective is seen as students' ability to use this knowledge to solve real world problems or to create products or performances that are valued in one or more cultural settings. This also reflects Howard Gardner's (1983) definition of intelligence.

A common constructivist learning strategy is to help students generate what they know about a topic before a lesson. This helps them to strengthen the connection between known and new. Generating prior knowledge can be done through the use of advanced organizers, anticipatory sets, or pre-questioning.

**3. Teaching as transformation.** This view perceives teaching as creating conditions that have the potential of transforming the learner on many different levels. Transformational teaching and learning invite both students and teachers to discover their full potential as learners, as members of society, and as human beings. The ultimate transformational goal is to become more nurturing human beings who are better able to perceive the interconnectedness of all human, plant, and animal life (Narve, 2001). Holistic education is an educational philosophy consistent with the transformative view. It centers on the principle of interconnectedness and seeks to integrate multiple levels of meaning and experience (Miller, 1996). Learning is said to have occurred when these experiences elicit a transformation of consciousness that leads to a greater understanding of and care for self, others, and the environment. Academic achievement from this perspective is seen as discovering and developing your unique talents and capabilities to the fullest extent possible. Academic achievement also involves become aware of the multiple dimensions of self and expanding one's consciousness.



**Table 1. Three views of teaching.**

	<b>Transmission</b>	<b>Transaction</b>	<b>Transformation</b>
<b>guiding philosophy</b>	positivism	constructivism	holism
<b>psychological basis</b>	behaviorism	cognitive psychology	transpersonal psychology
<b>role of teacher</b>	supply students with designated body of knowledge	help students transact with knowledge to create personal meaning	create transforming conditions and experiences, enable students to perceive connections, and encourage inner exploration
<b>role of student</b>	passively receive information	interact with information	use information and experiences for self-transformation; reflection and search for meaning; discover and develop talents

Learning can take place using all three views or approaches. This course, however, emphasizes the idea that the most powerful and sustaining learning experiences are created when transactional and transformational approaches are used.



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